

*Town of Spencer*  
Office of the Board of Selectmen  
&  
Town Administrator

Board of Selectmen:  
*Gary E. Woodbury*  
*Donald R. Berthiaume, Jr.*  
*John F. Stevens*  
*Robert O. "Bo" Fritze, Jr.*  
*Anthony D. Pepe*

Town Administrator:  
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Dear Citizens of Spencer:

On behalf of the Board of Selectmen, I offer my thanks to you for taking an ongoing interest in your Town. This Annual Town Report represents major activities of Town government during 2013.

As many of you are aware, 2013 proved to be a challenging year for the Board as we dealt with a major crisis resulting from the Spencer East Brookfield Regional School District (SEBRSD) budget deficit. After two overrides failed in both Towns, a District-wide meeting was held and a compromise was approved by the attendees. Although the new amount would still have a major impact on Town services, it would prevent cuts to essential services. The final step in the process as required by State law was for the School Committee to vote on the amended amount, which regrettably did not pass and resulted in the need for State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to set the budget. While the amount set by the DESE resulted in an additional \$120,000 over the amount approved at the District-wide meeting, it was still significantly lower than the number the SEBRSD was seeking, thanks in large part to the comprehensive report submitted to the DESE by our Town Administrator.

Nevertheless, as a result of this final amended amount, difficult decisions were made resulting in various budget reductions including the use of funding allocated to relocate the Senior Center, which was used to help cover the shortfall without the need for a proposition 2 ½ override. This crisis also consumed a great deal of time and effort and in the meantime, we were unable to move forward with necessary planning and other priorities were placed on hold while we worked towards a resolution. At this time we are moving forward with FY15 financial planning and will analyze the budget in detail and make informed decisions in all areas.

The next challenge we faced was working to reduce the cost of operating the Transfer Station, which was a priority for 2014. Our Utilities and Facilities Superintendent presented a review of options for its future, and the Board had to make a decision on

how we could keep operating a service that the Towns people had asked to have continued. We held a public hearing on this and felt we needed to take this task off the Administrator's shoulders to allow him to focus on critical issues that will provide long term benefits to the Town, including budget deficit resolution, regionalization where feasible, and ongoing strategic planning.

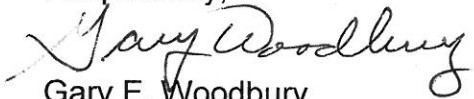
Working with the Town Administrator, the Board acted on a variety of other matters in 2013 including an inter-municipal stormwater agreement as part of a Community Innovation Challenge grant, a PILOT Agreement with Borrego Solar, an Agricultural Preservation Restriction for Sibley Farms and a Conservation Restriction at Burncoat Pond Sanctuary/Green Properties, as well as ongoing work on a Community Development Block Grant administered through Pioneer Valley Planning Commission for future improvement projects consisting of housing, infrastructure and planning, all funded through the Sate program.

On a lighter note, the Board presented the Boston Post Road Cane to Mary Madden as Spencer's oldest resident at age 99! Part of that distinction includes performing the countdown to the fireworks at Family Fun Day and serving as the Grand Marshall in the Christmas Parade. We are grateful to Ms. Madden, who considered this an honor and performed both jobs well.

On behalf of the Board, I wish to express my sincere thanks to Administrator Gaudette and to all Town employees and volunteers for helping to make Spencer a great place to live as we continue to overcome setbacks and move forward in 2014.

In closing it has been said that our Town employees should be thankful they have a job. My answer to them is we should be thankful for the employees we have and I thank them for all they do.

Respectfully,

  
Gary E. Woodbury  
Chairman